



Rising to the Challenge:
Budgeting for the Realities of Women's Lives in Canada Today
Pre-Budget Submission to the House Standing Committee on Finance
YWCA Canada
August 12, 2011

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As the country's largest single provider of shelter to women facing violence, YWCA Canada welcomes the government's June 2011 Throne Speech commitment to "address the problem of violence against women and girls."

Recommendation 1: Lead Policy Coordination on Violence Against Women

YWCA Canada urges the government to implement the major recommendation of [Life Beyond Shelter](#) for policy coordination at all three levels of government. Budget 2012 should commit the federal government to leading a process, with input from the women's service sector, to coordinate policies on violence against women at all three levels of government to ensure women's safety.

Recommendation 2: Address Emergency Shelter Service Gaps

To begin implementation of the Throne Speech commitment to address violence against women and girls, Budget 2012 should initiate an annual grant fund, administered by Status of Women Canada, to address identified service gaps in the provision of emergency shelter for women fleeing violence.

Recommendation 3: Initiate Child Care Services Discussions

Today, young women graduate from universities and colleges at greater rates than young men, and two-thirds of women with a child under 6 are in the workforce. Budget 2012 should commit the federal government to opening discussions with the provinces on early learning and child care to ensure future prosperity and respond to changes in the workforce and family life.

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Budgeting for the Realities of Women's Lives in Canada Today

For over 100 years, YWCA Canada has advocated for policies and programs that improve the lives of women and girls. As Canada's oldest and largest women's multi-service

agency, our 34 Member Associations raise and spend over \$190 million annually providing services in communities in nine provinces and in two territories.¹

YWCA Canada's perspective is grounded in first-hand knowledge of the life experiences of tens of thousands of women, girls and families who use our programs and services every year, from Victoria to Iqaluit to Halifax. With over 140 years of history, we are Canada's largest provider of shelter for women and children fleeing violence and of employment services for women, and the second largest provider of child care.

Women make up the majority of Canada's population, and are a steadily increasing portion of a workforce that is essentially comprised equally of men and women. Young women today graduate from universities and colleges at greater rates than young men. Building a prosperous future for our country must include building a prosperous future for women in Canada. Women are central to the nation's prosperity and productivity. An economic policy that fails to recognize this will fail for lack of foundation in the realities of women's lives Canada today.²

Gender-based analysis of spending assesses the impact of policies and budgets based on gender, and evaluates gender bias in government spending. Also known as gender budget analysis, this tool analyzes the "gender impacts of budget processes and macroeconomic policies."³ It is in use world-wide. As a step in the budget process, gender-budget analysis permits correction for gender bias of policies assumed to be gender neutral. YWCA Canada encourages the government to implement the recommendations of the February 2009 Report of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, *Towards Gender Responsive Budgeting: Rising to the Challenge of Achieving Gender Equality* across the government including in the 2012 budget process and in particular with regard to all legislation identified as part of the government's Law and Order Agenda.

BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS

1) Address Violence Against Women: Throne Speech, June 2011

As the country's largest single provider of shelter to women facing violence, YWCA Canada welcomes the government's June 2011 Throne Speech commitment to "address the problem of violence against women and girls."

Over the last decade, YWCA Canada has conducted extensive research on responses to violence against women and girls – including service analysis and violence prevention - culminating in our 2009 policy report [*Life Beyond Shelter: Toward Coordinated Public Policies for Women's Safety and Violence Prevention*](#), with recommendations for federal government action and documentation of promising practises across Canada.

YWCA Canada urges the government to review the recommendations of [Life Beyond Shelter](#) with a view to reducing violence against women and the \$4 billion plus annual cost. The strongest recommendation of this report is for policy coordination at all three levels of government. To implement the government's Throne Speech commitment, the federal government should lead the coordination process by establishing up federal-provincial-municipal discussions to ensure policy coordination with input from the violence support service sector and other relevant sectors (such as public health).

Recommendation 1: Lead Policy Coordination on Violence Against Women
Budget 2012 should commit the federal government to leading a process, with input from the women's service sector, to coordinate policies on violence against women at all three levels of government to ensure women's safety.

Cost: Administrative only

Funding Source: Recoverable through reductions of inter-jurisdictional

2) Improve Access to Emergency Shelter: Implement Throne Speech

Since the 1970s, Canada has developed a mature system of emergency shelters for women fleeing violence, largely violence in their homes perpetrated by spouses and other intimate partners. Initiated by women who set up safe houses in their communities, in most of the country this community-based response has evolved over three decades into a professional social service accessible to women post-violence. However, research has identified crucial gaps in this system.⁴ To ensure all Canadian women who need it have access to emergency shelter as protection from violence, the system needs further development for:

- Rural women
- Women in the Northern territories
- Accessibility accommodations for women with disabilities
- Culture and language competency in service provision

In addition, the housing crisis in all three northern territories profoundly impacts women with children who are trying to escape violence. Housing in the three northern territories has been seriously disadvantaged by the lack of federal social housing funding.⁵

Recommendation 2: Address Emergency Shelter Service Gaps

To begin implementation of the Throne Speech commitment to address violence against women and girls, Budget 2012 should initiate an annual grant fund, administered by Status of Women Canada, to address identified gaps in provision of emergency shelter to women fleeing violence.

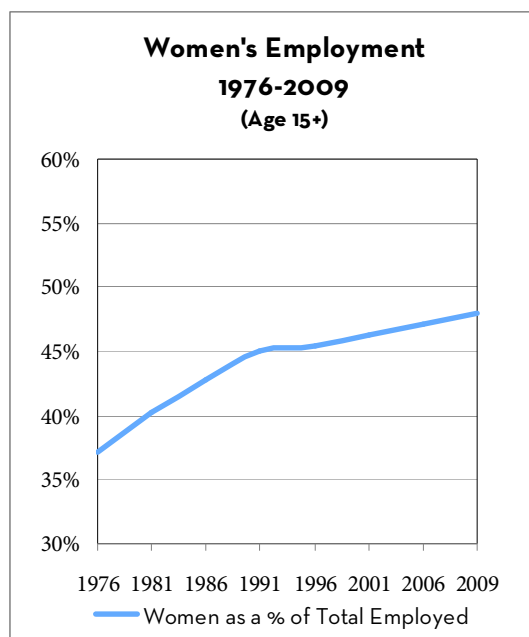
Cost: \$13 million

Funding Source: 3% reduction in the planned 25% budget increase (\$458 million operating and capital) for Custody for Correctional Service Canada (2011-12 main estimates) for costs of the Truth in Sentencing Act, 2009 through gender-budget analysis and staged implementation.

3) Women Lead in Education: Stimulate Child Care Services

YWCA Canada continues to encourage the federal government to take steps to ensure access to child care services for all families that seek it.

More than 30 years of uninterrupted increases in women's employment has given Canada a labour force that is virtually gender-balanced, the result of an incremental but relentless upward trend in women's employment since 1976 that has doubled the number of women employed in Canada. A continuation of the average yearly increase of the last 30 years (.327 percentage points) will see women permanently surpass men in employment before the end of the decade.



The employment rate of women with children – mothers – has followed a similar upward trend, from a 27.6% employment rate for women with infants and toddlers (youngest child under three) in 1976 to 64.4% in 2009. Two thirds of mothers (66.5%) with a youngest child in pre-school or kindergarten were in the work force in 2009.⁶

Women's increased labour force participation has been supported by a multi-decade trend toward increased attainment of higher education. According to Statistics Canada, a "dramatic reversal has taken place on Canadian university campuses." Women have risen from 32% of young graduates in 1971 to

60% in 2006 and surpass men as numbers of graduates in many professions.⁷

University Graduates Age 25-29 by Gender⁸

| Year | 1971 | 1981 | 1991 | 2001 | 2006 |
|----------|------|------|------|------|------|
| % Female | 32 | 46 | 51 | 58 | 60 |

At the same time, women retain the majority of responsibility for child care. The prosperity of the nation is intimately tied to the labour force participation of an educated, skilled workforce that has become increasingly female. Barring a major shift of men into child-rearing, nationwide access to early learning and child care services becomes increasingly essential to the nation's future economic prosperity.

With provincial governments investing in full-day kindergarten, the federal government has the opportunity to engage provincial and territorial governments in discussion on developing early learning and child care. Investment in child care for low-income families

has been shown to yield a substantial financial rate of return, anywhere from \$4 to \$16 for every dollar invested, according to studies.⁹ Such investment would support the federal government's efforts to eliminate the deficit and return to a balanced budget through economic growth. Early learning and child care is a fiscally smart investment.

Recommendation 3: Initiate Child Care Services Discussions

Budget 2012 should commit the federal government to opening discussions with the provinces on early learning and child care to ensure future prosperity and respond to changes in the workforce.

Cost: Administrative only.

Women are key to Canada's economic prosperity today and will only become more critical in the future. As women continue to assume a greater share of the tax burden, the federal government needs to adapt policies to the realities of women's lives today. Adoption of gender budget analysis is essential to providing policies that build Canada's economy and to fostering a safe country where women are not subject to violence in the family home or on the streets of their communities, or to incarceration for defending themselves and their children. A prosperous future for our country requires ensuring Canada's women - with their skills, talents and education - have full access to the workforce and exercise of all their democratic rights. Anything less is a disservice to the country and a failure to rise to the challenge of the future.

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¹ YWCA Canada, Annual Report 2010, June 2011.

² For example, although general poverty rates for Aboriginal women are much higher than for non-Aboriginal women, for women with one or more post-secondary degrees, Aboriginal women have a higher median income than non-Aboriginal women. *The Income Gap between Aboriginals and the Rest of Canada*, CCPA 2010.

³ Isabella Bakker, "Gender Budget Initiatives and Why the Matter in Canada", *Alternative Federal Budget 2006*, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, 2006.

⁴ YWCA Canada, *Life Beyond Shelter: Toward Coordinated Policies for Women's Safety and Violence Prevention*, YWCA Canada, October 2009; Statistics Canada, *Transition Homes in Canada: National, Provincial and Territorial Fact Sheets 2007/2008*.

⁵ YWCA Canada, *Life Beyond Shelter: Toward Coordinated Policies for Women's Safety and Violence Prevention*, YWCA Canada, October 2009.

⁶ V. Ferrao, *Paid Work, Women in Canada: A Gender-based Statistical Report*, Statistics Canada, December 2010

⁷ M. Frenette & K. Zeman, *Why are the majority of university students women?* Statistics Canada, December 2008, <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/81-004-x/2008001/article/10561-eng.htm>

⁸ Ann Decter, *Educated, Employed and Equal: The Economic Prosperity Case for Child Care*, YWCA Canada, 2011.

⁹ Nathan Laurie, *The Cost of Poverty: An Analysis of the Economic Cost of Poverty in Ontario*, Ontario Association of Food Banks, November 2008.